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Security Council

Sixtieth year

Provisional

5130th meeting

Thursday, 24 February 2005, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Adechi	(Benin)
Members:	Algeria	Mr. Baali
	Argentina	Mr. Mayoral
	Brazil	Mr. Tarrisse da Fontoura
	China	Mr. Zhang Yishan
	Denmark	Ms. Løj
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Greece	Mr. Vassilakis
	Japan	Mr. Kitaoka
	Philippines	Mr. Baja
	Romania	Mr. Motoc
	Russian Federation	Mr. Denisov
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Mahiga
	United States of America	Mr. Leahy

Agenda

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2005/88)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

05-24777 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2005/88)

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Albania, Luxembourg and Serbia and Montenegro, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

On behalf of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Nebojsa Ović, President of the Coordination Centre of Serbia and Montenegro and of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Ović (Serbia and Montenegro) took a seat at the Council table; the representatives of the other aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Søren Jessen-Petersen, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Jessen-Petersen to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, document S/2005/88.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Søren Jessen-Petersen, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Jessen-Petersen: The three months since my last report to the Security Council have been marked by a positive trend in what is a crucial year for Kosovo and for the region. The challenges ahead of us in the coming months are, however, considerable. Let me first say a few words on the progress made.

The security situation continues to improve based on strong daily cooperation between the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), the Kosovo Police Service (KPS) and the Kosovo Force (KFOR), to whose Commander and forces I would like to pay tribute. Levels of serious crime are low — indeed, not higher than other comparably populated areas of Europe — and the trend is positive. Crime rates are showing no evidence of ethnic bias in policing or judicial processes. Community policing initiatives and the ongoing successful transition of policing responsibility to the Kosovo Police Service are helping to bring policing closer to all the people of Kosovo. Where additional security measures are required for particularly vulnerable areas, these are taken.

Two recent trips, by the Prime Minister and by the President of Serbia, passed off without incident and confirmed the professionalism of KFOR, the UNMIK police and the KPS, and the good cooperation among them.

While we have made progress, the Kosovo security environment does, however, remain fragile. I therefore welcome the recent decision by NATO to maintain KFOR's operational capabilities during this crucial year.

Members of the minority communities continue to feel insecure. Kosovo's Serb community is, regrettably, often the victim of misinformation that is

disproportionate to the facts on the ground. Fears, whether fuelled by misinformation or by intimidatory acts, and even when not borne out by facts, translate into largely self-imposed limits on freedom of movement, and, thus, limits on access to employment, health care, electricity, justice and education. These perceptions of insecurity also prevent many displaced Kosovo Serbs from returning to their homes. The Prime Minister of Kosovo, Ramush Haradinaj, has set an example to political leaders and officials, and to the people of Kosovo, by continuing to reach out to Kosovo Serbs and other minorities through repeated, inclusive public statements and through visits to municipalities, where he has met with returnees. It is important that other political leaders and citizens follow his example.

The new two-party coalition government has, since taking office on 3 December 2004, undertaken a sustained effort to accelerate standards implementation on the basis of a number of priority standards goals and indicators to measure progress, agreed upon between the government and UNMIK. As members know, priority standards goals are those central to the improvement of the rights and living conditions of minority communities and to the building of a multi-ethnic, democratic and stable Kosovo.

The conclusions of the technical assessment before the Council are clear: The Provisional Institutions of Self-Government have made tangible progress, but there is further to go to ensure that the positive processes are translated into action on the ground. The new government is aware of that and continues to be committed to delivering standards as its first priority. Leadership by the Prime Minister and his Cabinet are creating both ownership and accountability. I am pleased to report to the Council a key step forward in the construction of democratic institutions in Kosovo. In accordance with the Constitutional Framework and in fulfilment of his commitments to me and to representatives of the international community, President Rugova has announced his resignation from the position of president of the political party he helped to found, the Democratic League of Kosovo.

In recognition of the central role of municipalities in delivering the most essential standards, the Prime Minister wrote to the presidents of all municipal assemblies to ask them to directly target their efforts on a number of immediate priorities agreed between the Government and UNMIK — including the use of languages, equal employment, property rights and returns — and to set clear deadlines for action. That initiative by the Prime Minister has resulted in considerable efforts and the beginning of results in many municipalities. I shall report on the full extent of the efforts and the results achieved in my next technical assessment.

All the elements of institution-building that I have mentioned, and upon which the implementation of standards is based, are important and will help the institutions of Kosovo better serve all the people of Kosovo in the future.

The Government has undertaken the reconstruction of almost all properties damaged or destroyed last year in March — nearly 900 houses in all, plus several schools. It has also provided cash grants to returning families. The Government and UNMIK are committed to achieving progress in the reconstruction of certain Orthodox churches and monasteries. The Provisional Institutions have transferred €4.2 million into the 2005 budget to finance the reconstruction of religious sites. Regrettably, progress has been blocked since last September by a senior figure in the Serbian Orthodox Church. However, the Holy Synod has now decided that Serbian Orthodox Church will re-engage constructively on the basis of the earlier agreement, a decision that opens the way to progress on church reconstruction.

The Government is moving on the devolution of authority to the local level to realign centralized structures of the past with European standards of local self-government. That is a complex and difficult exercise anywhere, and Kosovo is certainly no exception. Nevertheless, we do detect a welcome degree of interest transcending ethnic division on the part of local authorities to implement the process, as that process offers tangible benefits to all. To succeed, the process must be aimed at bringing municipal authorities closer to citizens. It must be an essential element in the process of integration, and, if successfully implemented, it will defeat the forces of division and do away with parallel structures once and for all.

The Government has just agreed on five pilot municipalities, two of which are of particular interest to Kosovo Serbs. The next step will be to define the exact nature of additional municipal competencies,

with particular attention given to areas such as policing, justice, education and health. As we move forward in that delicate and difficult process, it is important that all political parties at the central and local levels, as well as all communities, are involved and that a Kosovo-wide consensus on the way ahead is pursued.

Over the last six months, we have accelerated the transfer of competences from UNMIK to the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in areas not related to sovereignty. Three new ministries — those of Communities and Returns, Local Government Administration, and Energy and Mining — have been established and are now becoming operational. In the field of the economy, significant transfers are taking place. We are looking at transferring further responsibilities in the areas of justice and police. Those transfers go hand-in-hand with an emphasis on accountability, including the availability of corrective measures if officials block progress. The Prime Minister has already demonstrated readiness to deal with non-performing officials. In order to ensure that transferred competencies can be exercised efficiently, we are also encouraging donors to coordinate and better target their efforts to help the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government build capacity across all areas.

Economic stagnation remains a serious concern. Unemployment is rampant, the social safety net is non-existent, and social and economic hardship could at any moment turn into a threat to political stability. The European Union's UNMIK pillar, which is under new leadership, is making some progress, and we are giving privatization greater impetus. However, it is clear that we will not find miracle solutions.

Real progress on the economy requires certainty on status combined with a healthy environment for investors and a functioning market economy. At present, we are focusing on short-term job generation, microcredit schemes and other measures that provide some degree of hope, in particular for young people, to pre-empt dramatic expressions of frustration. The Government is engaged in developing a comprehensive Kosovo development plan comprising different sectors of the economy, including energy, to help chart the road ahead in the medium and the long term.

The full receipt of telecommunications revenues would give an important boost to the economy in Kosovo. In that context, I am pleased that a study group of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has just concluded that there is no obstacle to the allocation — on a temporary basis and in accordance with Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) — of a dialling code to UNMIK, in line with our request. We trust that the ITU will now rapidly allocate such a code, as requested by the United Nations, and thus help stimulate the economy.

Work is proceeding on a census of the population of Kosovo, which will — and should — include internally displaced persons in Serbia and Montenegro. That is needed as a basis for important activities, including the development of economic strategies and the reform of local self-government. We are looking at best practices from recent similar exercises in the region. The Provisional Institutions will present their project document to a donors' meeting on the census next month.

As we move forward, dialogue remains essential at various levels, including local dialogue between majority and minority communities. Regrettably, following their election boycott last October, Kosovo Serbs are still staying outside most political and democratic processes. There is some progress, however. A Kosovo Serb recently joined the Government as Minister for Returns and Communities, and Kosovo Serbs have participated in recent talks on decentralization. However, it is my impression that many Kosovo Serbs are frustrated and are waiting for more positive signals from Belgrade. They know that their future lies in Kosovo - as confirmed by Mr. Tadić, the President of Serbia, during his recent visit to Kosovo — and they need to take an active part in the democratic process to help shape that future.

I am pleased to inform the Council that direct dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade is about to resume, after 12 months of boycott by Belgrade. It has now been confirmed that the Working Group on Missing Persons will resume its work on 10 March, with the International Committee of the Red Cross acting as chair. I hope that the Working Group will make a significant contribution to an early resolution of one of the most painful legacies of the war. We are also discussing other areas of dialogue with Belgrade, and I am hopeful that the recent more positive signals

from Belgrade will result in an intensification of the direct dialogue.

The regional dialogue with Tirana, Skopje and Podgorica continues to develop in a variety of fields, including the economic one. We expect high-level visits to Pristina from both Skopje and Tirana to take place shortly.

Finally, in the international field, UNMIK, KFOR and Kosovo's Provisional Institutions are maintaining close and frequent contact with the Contact Group — meeting about every six weeks in Pristina — and with our close partners NATO, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. We also have frequent and continuous dialogue with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Council of Europe, among others. Last Monday, I had the opportunity to brief the EU foreign ministers on the situation and the way ahead, and I stressed the key role that the European Union must play, in close cooperation with the members of the Contact Group and, of course, with the United Nations.

So there is progress, but at the same time problems do remain. Much more has to be done to reassure the minorities that they have a future in Kosovo, to guarantee freedom of movement for the minorities, and to speed up the process of returns of displaced persons. There is constant pressure from our side for progress, and we are holding the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government fully accountable for continuing to make progress in line with the promising start of the Government. At the same time, the improvement of the economy in the short term, pending the outcome of status discussions, must receive and is receiving constant attention and action.

Following my next technical assessment in May, a comprehensive review of standards is planned to take place in mid-2005. Should that review conclude that sufficient progress has been made, the international community should be prepared to embark on a process leading to status talks. My evaluation is that we have a good chance of keeping to that timetable and that the process leading to status talks could therefore begin in the second half of this year. At the same time, we must also understand that, as we move towards the status process, tensions may rise. The Kosovo Albanians who want to enter that status process have understood that violence will be a major setback. On the other hand, those bent on derailing the process may see violence as their only means to do so. The message must be clear: Provocations and violence cannot be allowed to stop progress towards a stable, multi-ethnic society in Kosovo.

I will not comment today on the principles that will guide status talks, with one exception. As I mentioned when I addressed the Council last November, the partition of Kosovo is simply not a realistic option as we move forward. The society we are trying to build in Kosovo must have space for all communities as a stable, tolerant, multi-ethnic democracy. As such, all talk about the partition of Kosovo becomes an agenda for those who may be eager to reignite the divisions and flames of the past. Partition, in my view, would betray European values of integration and coexistence. Partition would also sacrifice the 60 per cent of Kosovo Serbs who do not live in the North, and it would reopen many wounds that are slowly beginning to heal throughout the region.

2005 is a key year for Kosovo. There is now broad agreement on a clear way forward and a clear timetable that could lead us to the negotiations on final status in the second half of this year. To defer that process for much longer would only prolong the pain, increase the risks and delay the day when the region turns its back on a painful past and moves forward towards a common European future.

Almost 14 years after the outbreak of a series of wars across the former Yugoslavia, and nearly six years after NATO intervened to put a halt to gross violations of human rights in Kosovo, 2005 is the year in which we must seize the opportunity to resolve one of the last conundrums of the former Yugoslavia: ensuring peaceful coexistence and mutual tolerance among all communities in Kosovo. The Provisional Institutions of Self-Government, the institutions and the people of Kosovo have further to go in implementing the priority standards, but initial progress, determination and effort, and accelerated pace are all tangible. I count on the Security Council to continue supporting the efforts of the institutions and the people of Kosovo to develop and shape their society and their future in Europe – as I have said, a multi-ethnic, stable, tolerant and democratic Kosovo at peace at home and at peace with its neighbours.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now give the floor to Mr. Nebojsa Ović, President of the

Coordination Centre of Serbia and Montenegro and Montenegro and of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija.

Mr. Ćović (Serbia and Montenegro) (*spoke in Serbian; English text provided by the delegation*): First of all, I would like to greet the Council on behalf of the Council of Ministers of Serbia and Montenegro and of the Republic of Serbia and express my appreciation for being able to participate in today's meeting of the Security Council on Kosovo and Metohija. I would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report.

Time and again, I have tried to draw the attention of the Security Council to the difficult position of the Serbian and other non-Albanian communities in Kosovo and Metohija, which has not often been properly addressed in the official reports coming from the province. In recent talks with international officials, I have been told that the world is tired of repeatedly coming back to this issue, that Kosovo and Metohija will never be like Switzerland in terms of the standards of a modern democratic society, and that it is necessary for Belgrade to change its approach in order to board the train which is leaving the station, with or without us.

Even at the risk of being reproached again, I cannot but repeat that the conditions of life of Serbs and other non-Albanians in the province are unacceptably poor. The Secretary-General has also unambiguously noted that fact in his latest report on the situation in Kosovo and Metohija. On this occasion as well, I would like to express my appreciation to the Special Representative who, despite the aggressive Albanian and international campaign to portray the achievements of the newly-elected Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in a more favourable light than the actual situation warrants, has consistently insisted that none of the standards was even close to being fulfilled.

The pretext for such a situation should be sought neither among the Kosovo Serbs nor in Belgrade, but in the general environment prevailing in the province, characterized by a lack of political maturity on the part of the leaders of the majority community. Let me offer some examples that convincingly illustrate the reality in Kosovo and Metohija. The Parliament and Government of Kosovo and Metohija are not truly multi-ethnic. There is no protection for non-Albanian communities from being out-voted. There is no strategy to resolve the massive unemployment or to embark upon economic recovery. There is a lack of opportunity for Serbs and other non-Albanians to find employment in the public sector, and a lack of elementary security for Serbs and other non-Albanians, whose freedom of movement is limited to the "humanitarian bus service" and the "freedom of movement" train. The ongoing illegal privatization serves as a basis for the further ethnic cleansing of Serbs and other non-Albanians by economic measures. The constant attacks and incidents against Serbs are neither isolated, nor condemned, nor countered by efficient measures by the local political leadership.

Serbs and other non-Albanians are deprived of all linguistic rights. Serbian property continues to be looted without any protection by the local authorities and police. There have been no returns of expelled and displaced persons nor any efforts to encourage returns. No municipality in Kosovo and Metohija has worked out a plan or a strategy for returns.

No efforts have been made to reconstruct the Serbian cultural heritage, and the Serbian Orthodox Church has been falsely blamed for that.

All forms of organized crime continue to thrive in Kosovo and Metohija, not only multi-ethnic but also multinational. The Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC) is a training ground for Albanian extremist groups committed to violence; the KPC is preparing to become an army, in direct violation of resolution 1244 (1999).

Serb and other non-Albanian national communities have practically no confidence in the political and administrative system in Kosovo and Metohija; they are totally prevented from taking part in all political processes, having been fully marginalized as second-class citizens.

Since October 2000, Pristina and Albanian leaders have been consistently evading the necessary dialogue with Belgrade, shifting the blame to Belgrade. The media in Kosovo and Metohija are promoting hate speech on a regular basis and are broadcasting falsehoods about Serbian and other non-Albanian communities; they have been engaged in a campaign for the province's independence, and carry hardly any Serbian-language broadcasts. There is no rule of law, and Serbian and other non-Albanians do not have access to the judicial system.

Despite such a situation, an inappropriate decision to open the question of the future status of Kosovo and Metohija has been made under the pretext that the perpetuation of the status quo is no longer possible. Understandably, no one is in favour of perpetuating the status quo in Kosovo and Metohija, least of all Belgrade. But we should be aware that the implementation of key provisions of resolution 1244 (1999) would be a major step forward, a move away from the status quo.

Clearly, with regard to the most sensitive issue related to Kosovo and Metohija — the preservation of its multi-ethnic character — not only has there not been any headway in the implementation of the resolution, but the situation has worsened. For almost six years now, the new reality of Kosovo and Metohija has been that one national community, the Serbian one, has been disappearing under pressure from, and violent acts by, the majority community. If this is an important yardstick for measuring the standards in the implementation of the rule of law, democracy and minority protection, not only do we have a status quo in Kosovo and Metohija, we have a general regression. These facts cannot possibly be hidden in any way. In light of these facts, how can we contemplate the perspective of a future status of Kosovo and Metohija at all?

Since their deployment in the province in June 1999, the international forces have been trying to put in place the standards of a modern multi-ethnic and democratic society. Three years ago, that approach to the resolution of the problems of Kosovo and Metohija was defined and officially called "standards before status", which Belgrade supported. Despite the negative assessment of the implementation of these standards — also indicated in the report of the Secretary-General — unjustifiably optimistic assessments were made that after six years of poor results, a turnaround and major progress would occur in just a few months, thus creating the conditions for negotiations on the future status of the province.

At the same time, there are suggestions that the "standards before status" will be reformulated into a "both standards and status" policy, which actually implies the recognition of the failure on the part of the international community and a search for a quick exit strategy, deliberately embracing a detrimental compromise as regards the creation of a truly multi-ethnic and democratic society in Kosovo and Metohija.

I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize that since the democratic Government took over in October 2000, Belgrade's approach has remained the same. We have been sincerely trying, as partners with the international community, to contribute to the establishment of a multi-ethnic society and to confidence-building. Immediately after the democratic changes took place in Belgrade, in 2000 and 2001, with the assistance of and in partnership with the international community, we jointly achieved great success in defusing the crisis in the south of central Serbia. However, when we tried to apply a similar approach in Kosovo and Metohija, we were blocked and all our initiatives were immediately rejected, since they came from Belgrade.

We are firmly committed to helping in a constructive manner so that the months-long deadlock in relations with Pristina are overcome as soon as possible. I would like to recall that this deadlock was a consequence of a mass organized pogrom against the Serbs carried out by the Albanian extremists in March last year. We believed then, as we do now, that the question of the survival of the Serbs is directly connected to more efficient and more reliable institutional protection for them as a community in Kosovo and Metohija. That is why we have focused our activities on decentralization as a crucial issue of security and institutional transformation of Kosovo and Metohija. In doing so, we did not want to diminish the importance of the so-called technical issues. However, in conditions of physical endangerment of the Serbian national community those issues were objectively less important. We do not believe that by placing some of these technical issues back on the agenda, the problem of decentralization has lost its crucial importance in the province.

In view of the above, we raised the issue of revitalizing the working groups for missing and abducted persons and for energy with the Special Representative, and we sought to initiate the process of reconstruction of the churches and monasteries damaged or destroyed in last year's wave of violence. The meeting of the working group for missing and abducted persons will be held in Belgrade on 10 March, and we hope that it will contribute to the resolution of this sensitive and, above all, humanitarian issue.

Some steps have also been taken in order to start the work of the high-level group on security, as well as

of working groups for decentralization, transport and returns. We hope that initial results will already be seen in the next few weeks. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate that Belgrade stands ready to participate fully in all processes in Kosovo and Metohija — however, on an equal footing, from beginning to end of each individual process, including the process of decentralization.

Let us return, in the end, to the popular metaphor that has been often used recently to describe the unfolding of the process in Kosovo and Metohija. Where is the train — which I mentioned at the beginning of this statement — heading? If the final destination is Europe rather than it being a local train, the train should allow us to travel steadily towards the full implementation of all standards of modern European States and to full membership in the European Union. There should be no stops at side stations, where bad compromises are made in reaching for the standards of a truly multi-ethnic society and where the borders of a mono-ethnic State are drawn. If its destination is Europe without compromises, Belgrade will be on that train.

Ms. Løj (Denmark): First of all, I should like to welcome Mr. Søren Jessen-Petersen, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), to the Council. I thank him for a comprehensive, interesting and encouraging briefing. This is only the second time that Mr. Jessen-Petersen has reported to the Council, and we are already full of respect for the impressive results he has achieved so far.

The representative of Luxembourg will shortly make a statement on behalf of the European Union. Denmark fully associates itself with that statement.

I would like to express my gratitude for the report of the Secretary-General that we have before us today, which contains UNMIK's second quarterly technical assessment of standards implementation in Kosovo. We will discuss a third assessment in May. Thus, we are at the halfway point in this essential but intricate process, which will have decisive influence on the future of Kosovo and indeed on the stability and prosperity of the broader region of Southeastern Europe. It is encouraging that the report highlights tangible progress in the reporting period, and we welcome that. Tribute should be paid to UNMIK and to the Special Representative, but also to the new Government, which has demonstrated real commitment and determination.

It is, however, notable and perhaps to be expected that the report concludes that at this stage progress in some key areas remains insufficient and further work is needed. We may be at the halfway point in time, but we are not yet halfway in implementation. It is therefore important that the Council today give its full support to the Special Representative and his staff in their admirable efforts to keep up the pace of the process. No one involved in standards implementation can afford to slow down now. The momentum must be maintained, and the focus should be strictly kept on the prioritized standards concerning the rule of law, freedom of movement, returns, functioning local institutions and security. In that way, our overall aim of securing a multi-ethnic Kosovo will be kept constantly in sight.

With a decision on a comprehensive midyear review on the horizon, we will in the coming months closely follow and measure the political commitment of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government and of the Kosovar communities in general to the standards process. Realistically, the 400 or so detailed indicators laid out in the Standards Implementation Plan will take some years to fulfil completely. But without an unambiguous demonstration of the political will and the administrative capacity to do it, we will not be able to move beyond the present phase.

In that regard, we call on all authorities and communities of Kosovo to engage in dialogue and standards implementation. The continued unwillingness of the Kosovo Serbs to do that is worrying, counterproductive for themselves and unhelpful for the process. The Provisional Institutions cannot be held accountable for delays caused by the unwillingness of the Kosovo Serbs to participate in the process. Belgrade and other opinion leaders in Kosovo bear their fair share of the responsibility for rectifying that situation. I welcome the fact that Belgrade has decided to resume direct dialogue with Pristina and that the working group on missing persons will meet in early March.

The Provisional Institutions of Self-Government should be given a real chance to show their worth. We support a further transfer from UNMIK to the Provisional Institutions of all competencies not directly involving sovereignty. That should be accompanied by

greater accountability and increased capacity-building. In other areas, the Provisional Institutions should be consulted in order to create a sense of local ownership.

Decentralization is an equally important element in the way forward, as it is instrumental in forming a basis for the political integration of minority communities and for the dissolution of parallel structures. We support the decentralization plan of UNMIK and the Provisional Institutions, while we encourage Belgrade to take up the advisory role for the Kosovo Serbs that has been reserved for it in these discussions.

In his last briefing to the Security Council three months ago, the Special Representative stressed that the international community would soon have to move beyond managing Kosovo as a "holding operation". My Government shares that view. A decision to start negotiations on Kosovo's final status should come this year. But there is no automaticity as to the start of talks. And while the reintegration of Kosovo into Serbia or the territorial division of Kosovo into Serb and Albanian areas may not be feasible solutions, there is no predetermined outcome of such talks. Any outcome will be conditioned primarily on the authorities' ability to secure a democratic and multi-ethnic Kosovo.

As any solution should be based on the broadest possible acceptance both locally and in Belgrade, it is our hope that all parties will participate in a constructive manner. Also crucial to such a process will be an endeavour to deal efficiently with Kosovo's dire economic situation. It is important for the efforts to secure economic growth and employment in Kosovo that UNMIK have access to international lending institutions. The clarification of property rights and, at a later stage, of Kosovo's future status will help to attract severely needed foreign direct investments. In general, probably only a regional approach to economic development and a common long-term European perspective will provide the framework necessary for narrowing the economic gap with the rest of Europe.

Finally, I should like to stress that an unconditional prerequisite for maintaining the positive momentum we now see in Kosovo is the maintenance and even the strengthening of security. Security in Kosovo has improved considerably since last March. We recognize and welcome that. But as the difficult questions of decentralization and rebuilding a multi-ethnic society are successfully dealt with, as suspected war criminals are summoned to the Tribunal in The Hague and as status talks approach, security could come under pressure. Some observers warn us that new inter-ethnic violence could erupt. Let us hope that they are overly alarmist.

But if such a scenario materializes, there will be no room for compromise or for pragmatic acceptance of impunity. Criminals responsible for the riots of March last year are being prosecuted, and the international community should be equally steadfast with regard to situations that might arise in the future.

Kosovo is entering a decisive period, and therefore it is particularly important that any political moves be safeguarded with the right level of military and police preparedness. The UNMIK police and the Kosovo Police Service have shown great skill and professionalism in tackling difficult situations — for instance, during the visit to Kosovo of Serbian President Tadic. KFOR has strengthened its operational capabilities, and we welcome NATO's intent to maintain its strong presence to deal with challenges that may arise. The Council should make absolutely clear that no group will be allowed to make political gains through provocations or through violence or the threat thereof.

So on the basis of what we have heard here today, it is with a strong sense of optimism and progress that we encourage the Council, the Secretary-General and the Special Representative to stay the course and to keep up the pace of standards implementation as we move into what will probably prove to be a very decisive year for Kosovo.

Mr. Denisov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Our delegation is grateful to the Secretary-General for his report on the work of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and to Mr. Søren Jessen-Petersen, Head of the Mission, for his comprehensive briefing on the situation in the province. We also note the participation in and the statement made at today's meeting by the President of the Coordination Centre of Serbia and Montenegro and of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija, Mr. Cović.

The assessments contained in the report and in the statement made by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to a large extent echo our view

of the processes occurring in Kosovo, Serbia and Montenegro. Despite some advances, progress in the implementation of standards in Kosovo remains, so far, uneven.

As the report notes, none of the eight standards has been so far implemented. We agree with the view of the Secretary-General that real progress in standards implementation in Kosovo will become possible only when the statements and the intentions of the political leaders of the province are reflected in concrete, effective action that brings solid results.

The non-participation by the Kosovo Serbs in the activities of the province's Provisional Institutions of Self-Government proves that Kosovo is still far from resolving the main challenge of creating a multi-ethnic and democratic society. The level of minority trust in the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government for Kosovo remains low. Moreover, the fears of the non-Albanian communities are being fuelled by all kinds of incidents that often are not eliciting due reaction from local political leaders. The provincial authorities are not taking the necessary action to prosecute those responsible for ethnically based crimes, to organize a system to monitor violations of the language laws, or to establish a culture of human rights and tolerance, particularly among the young people of Kosovo.

Efforts are still insufficient to speed up the process of returns. We are convinced that today the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government must take visible practical steps to create conditions that would encourage minorities to cooperate with the provincial authorities and to participate in all ongoing activities in Kosovo. The majority community, as is quite rightly noted in the report, must create a climate in which members of the minority communities, in particular the Kosovo Serbs, feel confident that they can return to Kosovo and that they can remain there. The speedy restoration of power supplies to the Kosovo Serb enclaves would be of great political and humanitarian importance.

The priority tasks of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in Kosovo, as we see it, include achieving concrete results in the priority areas of providing security, freedom of movement and equal rights for ethnic minorities, as well as post-March rebuilding and accelerating refugee returns and the return of displaced persons from the non-Albanian community.

Of course, as the Secretary-General quite rightly warns, any outbreaks of violence such as the ones that took place in Kosovo in March 2004 would be a step back in the process of finding a political settlement.

Let me make another specific point as well. We deem of great importance for the normalization of inter-ethnic relations in the province the restoration, with the constructive cooperation of the Orthodox Church, of religious and cultural heritage sites that were damaged or destroyed during the outbreak of violence that took place in March 2004.

Frankly, there is something we do not fully understand. We were surprised to hear statements to the effect that the Serbian Orthodox Church has opted out of these reconstruction efforts. In this situation, which is very delicate, we believe that a special role could be played by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) in helping to find a mutually acceptable option for resolving this problem for the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government and the Serbian Orthodox Church.

Moreover, we believe that involving Belgrade in the negotiating process would help to find a solution to the whole range of priority problems for the ethnic minorities in the province. We, like the Secretary-General, take note of the recent proposal by Belgrade to resume direct expert dialogue on missing persons and on energy. The constructive participation of all parties could only help to restore trust and bring about reconciliation among the communities.

Reforming local government is important to the normalization of the situation in Kosovo. We believe that it is appropriate to continue the practice of consulting on decentralization within the format of the September meeting that was held in Vienna, that is, with the participation of the representatives of UNMIK, the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government of Kosovo, Kosovo Serbs, Belgrade and the Contact Group. This is particularly useful given the need to establish constructive interaction between the United Nations Mission and the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government with the Kosovo Serbs and Belgrade.

We welcome the progress that has been made in resolving economic difficulties in Kosovo. We take note of the increased oversight over the pension system and the banking sector of the province, as well as the fact that the process of privatization is continuing and

that, on the whole, there is some capacity-building of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in the economic sector.

However, assigning additional authority to the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government should be accompanied by greater accountability and greater effective control over its activities by the head of UNMIK. In particular, there should be appropriate sanctions against those persons whose actions run counter to the tasks set forth in the Kosovo standards. We deem it exceptionally important that the Secretary-General has drawn the conclusion that resolution 1244 (1999) is the essential political platform for reaching a settlement in Kosovo. We remain committed to the comprehensive strategy of the Secretary-General for Kosovo as well as to full and consistent support for the policy of standards before status.

The lasting stabilization of the province will be possible only if there is an agreed international strategy, with the lead role being played by the Security Council. We deem highly useful the initiative of Romania to dispatch to Kosovo a Security Council mission right before the next assessment, so that Council members could have firsthand information to form an objective picture of the situation in the province.

We firmly believe that there can be no automaticity in launching the upcoming political process for determining the future status of the province unless there is real progress towards the implementation of democratic standards and unless the Security Council takes a specific decision in that respect.

Russia, for its part, is prepared to cooperate very closely with the Secretary-General and with his Special Representative, with the head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, Mr. Jessen-Petersen, as well as with partners in the Contact Group, in the interest of consolidating stability and security for all inhabitants of the province.

Mr. Kitaoka (Japan): Mr. President, I would like to thank you for convening today's public meeting. I wish also to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Søren Jessen-Petersen, for his briefing, which I found very illuminating and insightful. We are fully aware of the fact that today's meeting has significant implications for the coming comprehensive review of the implementation of the standards planned for the middle of this year.

Japan welcomes the relatively smooth establishment of the coalition Government of Provisional Institutions of Self-Government, based on the results of the election held last October, as evidence of political maturity in Kosovo, which was also acknowledged as such by the Secretary-General. We would like to commend the proactive efforts of the new Provisional Institutions for the implementation of the standards, and we welcome the fact that measurable progress has been made towards the implementation of the standards, coupled with noteworthy concrete steps in several areas.

Japan, however, acknowledges that many challenges remain to be addressed by the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government on the implementation of the standards. In particular, I am concerned that progress has been impeded in the areas of minorities' freedom of movement and sustainable returns. While I would like to express Japan's appreciation for the efforts of all parties concerned, such as KFOR, to maintain security as a prerequisite for implementing the standards, it is important to point out that minorities' fear is the major obstacle confronting them. Therefore, I would also like to strongly urge political leaders in Kosovo to make further initiatives to remove such fear.

From that perspective, Japan calls on the Provisional Institutions to engage in an inter-community dialogue initiative in order to rebuild confidence and trust. Through these efforts, we expect increased participation by Kosovo Serbs in the standards implementation process. They will also have the effect of reminding us that the implementation of standards must benefit all the people of Kosovo.

Japan appreciates the progress made in the discussions on decentralization, as reported by the Secretary-General. The results of the pilot projects that are scheduled to be carried out in March in several sub-municipal bodies, including one in an area where mainly Kosovo Serbs reside, will be of importance in that regard. I would like to reiterate my request here for the united efforts of all Kosovo political leaders in this undertaking. At the same time, the Belgrade authorities must halt their assistance to parallel structures and must encourage all Kosovo Serbs to

participate in the political process in Kosovo, including in discussions on the issue of decentralization.

Macroeconomic indicators show Kosovo to be in a calm recovery phase. Noting, however, that the unemployment rate remains high, and that the poverty rate is increasing, we continue to recognize that the economic situation in Kosovo remains serious. We expect that Mr. Joachim Rücker, the new head of the UNMIK's pillar IV, in cooperation with the Provisional Institutions, will make the utmost effort to realize economic development through the privatization of socially owned companies and the formulation and implementation of a social development plan.

Japan also shares the view expressed in the report of the Secretary-General that the lack of reliable electricity is a serious constraint on Kosovo's development. However, while the stable provision of electricity is essential for the long-term development of Kosovo, taking into account that electricity is a basic need of the inhabitants of the region, the reform of Kosovo's energy sector should not be politicized. Japan calls on all parties concerned to seek a solution to this issue with earnest and sincerity.

Japan co-hosted the Ministerial Conference on Peace Consolidation and Economic Development of the Western Balkans last April and is working on the follow-up activities to that meeting. We wish to reaffirm our commitment to the region, including our intention to provide assistance, in cooperation with the international community, to advance the Kosovo Standards Implementation Plan. As a member of the Security Council, Japan would like to express its readiness to participate constructively in the comprehensive review of the standards scheduled for the middle of 2005.

Mr. Mayoral (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to join previous speakers in thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Søren Jessen-Petersen, for his thorough briefing on activities carried out by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), in accordance with Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), and on events in Kosovo between 1 November 2004 and 31 January 2005.

My delegation wishes to underscore positive signs highlighted in the Secretary-General's report on progress in implementing a comprehensive and integrated strategy. We agree with the report's assessment that increased attention to standards implementation on the part of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government and efforts to ensure that implementation is carried out — such as the establishment of a coalition government following the October 2004 elections and public demonstrations in support of the standards — are all encouraging signs.

That not withstanding, we cannot fail to mention that the same report says that none of the eight standards has been completely fulfilled. We, therefore, urge the Provisional Institutions, political leaders and members of all communities to make every effort to ensure effective fulfilment of the standards. In that context, we join in the Secretary-General's appeal to the Kosovo Serbs to participate constructively in the institutions and processes of Kosovo and that the Serbian authorities encourage this participation so that Kosovo Serbs will participate in the local government reform process.

In addition, we believe that the Provisional Institutions must take visible measures to facilitate the return of displaced persons. The majority community must create a climate in which members of minority communities, in particular the Kosovo Serbs, feel safe enough to return and to stay in Kosovo. The Serbian authorities must also encourage this process. Moreover, we believe that the majority community must facilitate and ensure actions that would create the conditions required for broad participation on the part of minority groups in all aspects of life in Kosovo, particularly by promoting their trust in the political and administrative systems and their participation in the political process. We feel that this is essential.

It is also worrying to see that there are still parallel structures in the health and education sectors. We, therefore, appeal for compromise and cooperation among those who are responsible for creating and promoting a stable multi-ethnic society.

We know that this cannot be achieved while minority communities are still concerned about their safety and their freedom of movement, and until interaction with members of the majority community is encouraged. The lack of such interaction inevitably heightens existing ethnic division. In addition, those fears and concerns become greater as a result of isolated incidents that are not always condemned. Once again, we call on the government to take the measures necessary to punish ethnic crimes, to set up a system

that will penalize violations of the language laws and promote a culture of human rights, and to faithfully implement the guidelines and standards established by UNMIK on respect for the rights of minorities.

Finally, my delegation wishes to draw attention to the need to meet the remaining priority standards goals in the economic area. The marginalization of minority communities in terms of access to employment and in terms of income will not help create a sustainable multi-ethnic Kosovo. In this context, we trust in the commitment of the new government and in Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj to maintain their political will to deliver standards for Kosovo as a priority and thus to correct the inequalities that still persist.

Mr. Baja (Philippines): We too are grateful to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Jessen-Petersen, for his comprehensive briefing. We appreciate the progress made in some areas, which Mr. Jessen-Petersen described to the Council this morning. Nevertheless, in trying to solve a problem like Kosovo, it is time to face some realities.

First, Kosovo has been run practically as a United Nations protectorate for the last six years. Although the Security Council sat out the Kosovo conflict, in significant ways it has owned the problem. Kosovo cannot remain in some sort of international limbo indefinitely. Secondly, under present circumstances, neither Kosovo's return to Belgrade's rule, nor its partition, nor any possible unification with Albania has a sporting chance of being supported. Thirdly, neither Kosovo Albanians, nor the Kosovo Serbs, nor Belgrade is able to adopt more accommodating positions.

This morning we heard a dichotomy of assessments of the situation in Kosovo. The problem for some delegations, in particular that of the Philippines, is not only what we still do not know, but what we do know that may not be so. Therefore, under the present circumstances, the suggested mission to Kosovo becomes a necessity.

We believe that it is time for the international community to begin to act decisively. NATO, which prosecuted the war, and the Group of Eight, which negotiated the peace, have key roles to play. The Security Council should not allow Kosovo to dangle much longer.

The six-member Contact Group should be able to devise a more viable road map for Kosovo. After all, four members of the Contact Group are permanent members of this Council, and the other two have their own passion with regard to the issue of permanent membership in the Council.

I think time is of the essence. A repetition of the deadly uprising in March last year is an unwanted but likely possibility if continuing uncertainty prevails on the ground. The economic situation, as painted this morning by the Special Representative to the Secretary-General, could be a ticking bomb and should be diffused as soon as possible. Another series of incidents like those of March 2004 would unravel whatever progress or gains NATO, the European Union, the government in Kosovo and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) have achieved for Kosovo. Another explosion like that of March 2004 would unleash the dogs of another war which would generate regional instability. Even a well-endowed UNMIK may be unable to contain the escalation of such an explosion.

Therefore, a process for determining the future status of Kosovo, with timelines and guarantees for the protection of minority rights and other human rights, is an attractive approach. We are gratified to know that this process could begin in the middle of the year. The challenge for the Council is to ensure that when the train leaves, the important passengers are on board.

Mr. Baali (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): I should like to thank Mr. Søren Jessen-Petersen for the excellent introduction he gave us to the report of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and to pay tribute through him to members of the United Nations mission for the outstanding job they have accomplished in the field.

The Council's consideration of the progress report on its agenda today allows us to appreciate the progress made — limited, of course, but still significant — in the process of the stabilization and normalization of the overall situation in Kosovo.

My delegation welcomes the establishment of the coalition government following the elections of last October and its commitment to continue on the path of reform, to consolidate local institutions and to implement established standards for Kosovo. The commitment of Kosovar leaders to quickly complete the rebuilding of property and the social and educational infrastructure that was damaged during the reprehensible events that took place last year, and their

resolve to relaunch the process of the return of displaced persons, are a positive development. That commitment is also a sign of the beginning of a process of détente and of an improvement in the situation in the best interests of all.

However, the progress remains insufficient, vis-à-vis the standards set by the international community and the expectations of the local people for improved economic and social conditions. Moreover, the fact that the Kosovo Serbs are not participating in the democratic process remains a source of concern for the international community and is a major obstacle to the advent of a democratic, tolerant and multi-ethnic Kosovo.

We take the opportunity to reiterate once again our appeal to all parties to participate fully in confidence-building efforts, to strengthen relations and to promote reconciliation among all Kosovars. The attainment of those goals is primarily incumbent upon the leaders and people of Kosovo, but it is no less for the international community to create all conditions for the comprehensive and successful implementation of established standards and to proceed, as soon as possible, to consideration of the basic question of the final status of Kosovo.

Mr. Tarrisse da Fontoura (Brazil): I wish to thank Special Representative Jessen-Petersen for providing us thorough information on the current situation in Kosovo. My delegation continues to appreciate and support his work and that of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We consider that his balanced technical assessment of progress in standards implementation offers an accurate picture of progress made and the challenges that remain for the future.

There seems to be little doubt that, in spite of encouraging movements by the Provisional Institutions, standards implementation is our toughest challenge in Kosovo. The report of the Secretary-General before us today refers to tangible progress that has to be made. We note, in this regard, achievements in the functioning of democratic institutions, such as the holding of fair and free elections and the establishment of a coalition government. We also note the improvement of the Kosovo Police Service, which is now fully multi-ethnic. Other noteworthy achievements are the establishment of ministries for communication, communities, returns and m and the approval of legislation for economic ref

In spite of the good progress made reporting period, none of the eight standard were laid out for Kosovo by the inter community has been completely fulfilled refugees and displaced persons are still afraid to their devastated towns and villages. Limited such as the reconstruction of some houses through the Kosovo consolidated budget, have effective in addressing persistent problems. F last year's ethnic violence could be re-ignited minorities from feeling safe in a homeland tha their own. Kosovo authorities have already that such violence will not be repeated, but th work harder and in concrete terms towards rel the confidence that has eroded since last March.

In fact, it is clear that the situation of m continues to be extremely precarious. Their da are still hampered by restrictions of movemen basic rights are not respected. Access to public and economic opportunities is still denied Moreover, sporadic manifestations of hatred them show that ethnic rivalries continue to sim that context, we can understand why the maj Kosovo Serbs regard the standard related to the law as the most important one.

Although we recognize the steps that ha taken towards democratic reform, we belie Kosovo's authorities should do more to effective participation in governmental struct minorities, and especially by the Serb m Kosovo Serbs must also do their part by e actively in the government and in the political p

Although calm, the security situation re source of concern. Mr. Jessen-Petersen warns state of things in Kosovo is still fragile and period of increased risk of incidents lies ahea Albanian majority must have realistic expec regarding the decision concerning the status otherwise frustration can lead to resentme turmoil, which would in fact be detrimental fulfilment of their own aspirations.

We once again urge the Provisional Institu continue to address as their highest priority the the implementation of standards as a whole. Fa do so will obstruct the beginning of the pro determine the final status of the province. A join

is needed by the international community and the Kosovo authorities to foster progress in the area of standards. In that regard, we support the efforts of the Contact Group to facilitate dialogue between the parties. We hope that the next meeting of the Group, which is scheduled to take place this week, can foster that dialogue.

A more positive contribution by Belgrade is also needed. The conditions established for the resumption of dialogue should be reviewed in the light of the willingness shown by the Kosovo government to engage in constructive talks. The authorities in Serbia and Montenegro are about to resume dialogue with Pristina. We also encourage them to avoid sending mixed signals that have thus far prevented the Serb minority from participating in all aspects of the process.

Brazil remains especially concerned about the human dimension of the situation in Kosovo. Uncertainty regarding the political future continues to mar prospects for badly needed economic recovery. In that regard, we once again stress the urgency of tackling unemployment, rural backwardness, gender disparity and deficits in the education, health and social welfare systems.

Resolution 1244 (1999) and the "standards before status" policy constitute a viable path to peace and reconciliation. In a year in which so many important decisions must be taken, unwavering political will and frank dialogue are needed more than ever to lead the province safely down the path towards a multi-ethnic, democratic and prosperous Kosovo that is at peace with its neighbours and that makes a contribution to stability in the Balkan region.

Mr. Motoc (Romania): We too are grateful for the briefing by Mr. Jessen-Petersen, Special Representative of the Secretary-General. Mr. Jessen-Petersen has a firm grip on the job in Kosovo, as has already been demonstrated by the good results achieved. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate Romania's full support for Mr. Jessen-Petersen as he tackles this year's many challenges. As always, we would also like to express our highest appreciation for, and encouragement to, the men and women of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the Kosovo Force (KFOR), as well as the staff of other international organizations and agencies working in Kosovo. I also thank Mr. Nebojsa Ćović, President of the Coordination Center for Kosovo and Metohija, for his briefing.

Romania associates itself fully with the statement that will be delivered later by the Ambassador of Luxembourg on behalf of the European Union.

The year 2005 is a significant one for Kosovo and the whole region of the Western Balkans. We need stability and security in Kosovo. But above all, we need a tolerant and democratic society there. Dialogue and thorough implementation of standards are essential. We welcome the signs of progress described in the report of the Secretary-General. There are indications of growing political maturity in Pristina, as proven by a rather smooth electoral process and the energetic approach to standards by the new government. We appreciate in particular the efforts made to disseminate the message on standards as broadly as possible among the population.

However, we will know that standards have succeeded when Serbs no longer fear for their lives in Kosovo. We recall the document on standards for Kosovo, which states that the future of Kosovo must be one in which all people — regardless of ethnic background, race or religion — are free to live, work and travel without fear, hostility or danger, and where there is tolerance, justice and peace for everyone. That is not yet the case in Kosovo.

We are aware that standards have multiple and complex dimensions. There are painful problems related to the economy, the rule of law, corruption, organized crime and so on. Children going to school under military escort, as described in the Secretary-General's report, is not a sign of normalcy, nor is it something that one can durably build upon. Fear for one's life and security — especially if that fear is ethnically motivated — must be addressed politically and in an urgent manner. That makes it one of the biggest challenges ahead for the political leaders of Kosovo. It will also be a clear and objective test of the implementation of standards. We also call on Serbs living in Kosovo to work with UNMIK and the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government to find ways to end such fears.

Dialogue at all levels, between all communities in Kosovo and between Belgrade and Pristina, is crucial at this moment. Romania notes the impediments to dialogue thus far. Nevertheless, we echo the call by the

Council of the European Union and the High Representative, Javier Solana, to all communities in Kosovo and to authorities in Belgrade and Pristina to engage in substantial dialogue.

Romania continues to promote the idea of a Security Council mission to Kosovo in the course of this year. We believe in the importance of such a mission, as it has been more than two years since the last one took place, in December 2002. Although the best moment for such a mission is yet to be determined, the Council needs to take its messages closer to all actors involved. It must also find ways to stimulate cooperation and dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina.

In that regard, I am pleased to welcome the comments made today by Mr. Jessen-Petersen and Mr. Ćović with regard to prospects for the resumption of direct dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. We hope that such a dialogue will be a meaningful one this time.

As for what needs to follow the standards evaluation, we reiterate our belief that a solution for Kosovo must flow from and be based on the broader European and Euro-Atlantic integration processes. Romania welcomes the recent confirmation of such a policy by the EU Council. Moreover, we believe that the legitimate concerns of countries in the neighbourhood should be duly taken into account.

Mr. Mahiga (United Republic of Tanzania): I should express my appreciation to Mr. Søren Jessen-Petersen, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We commend the dedication of the entire United Nations Mission in Kosovo.

I join others in welcoming the current report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo. It is yet another reminder that we cannot give up on our belief in and insistence on a multi-ethnic Kosovo in which all ethnic groups can live freely without fear. We commend the work being done by the Special Representative. We also share his dedication to ensuring that the situation in Kosovo does not degenerate, but improves to serve the aspirations of all people to justice, peace and prosperity in a multi-ethnic Kosovo.

We are encouraged by progress made by the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in the implementation of the standards for Kosovo. We note with concern, however, that, although work on the standards has intensified, progress in many areas has been slow and that none of the set eight standards has been completely fulfilled. It is absolutely essential that the political leadership in Belgrade and Pristina do more work and engage in serious dialogue towards the full implementation of the standards.

It is encouraging to note that there are internally self-generated signs of political maturity in elections and Government formation based on democratic principles. That must be welcomed, strengthened and consolidated. We welcome the positive commitment of Kosovo's opposition parties to playing a more constructive role and to respecting the Constitutional Framework.

The implementation of the standards remains key for Kosovo. Thus, new mechanisms and structures need to be put in place for specific actions with the potential for providing positive results. The standards are important, as they address a multiplicity of concerns that are legitimate, fair and necessary. There is no alternative to the standards and they should not be renegotiated.

We urge greater efforts to be made to obtain the cooperation of the Kosovo Serb community with the Provisional Institutions, since that remains a major hurdle to constructing the necessary institutions of governance under the Constitutional Framework. At the communal level, more deliberate initiatives are required to promote incremental measures for more inter-communal trust, interaction and accommodation.

The progress made in the area of local Government reform is commendable and needs support so as to increase the pace of the devolution of authority at the local level. Local communities need to be encouraged to make full use of this opportunity to enrich their cultural identities and aspirations while overcoming politically motivated ethnic divisions.

We encourage the measures, albeit still limited, that have been taken in promoting gender equality, including the filling of obvious gender gaps and the revisiting of legal issues, together with the development of an action plan for gender equality.

We note that the security situation has remained stable and that the safety of minorities has improved slightly. None of us can rest until all the people in Kosovo are secure and at peace with themselves. That freedom of movement has remained delicate is a source of concern that requires urgent attention. Kosovo Serbs who consider themselves at risk need to be reassured of their freedom.

Efforts directed at infrastructure development, humanitarian assistance, the reconstruction of buildings, the supply of reliable electricity and the strengthening of monetary institutions are crucial in addressing Kosovo's economic difficulties. We urge efforts by all, including international partners, donors and relevant agencies, to enhance the assistance that Kosovo and its people need for their future.

Lastly, we recognize that the President of Serbia, Boris Tadic, paid a visit to Kosovo last week — the first visit by a President of Serbia since the inception of UNMIK in June 1999. We welcome such visits and hope they will serve to build confidence among the people of Kosovo. We hope that Belgrade will continue to be more forthcoming and supportive in the ongoing efforts to build bridges between the majority and minority communities in Kosovo and to enhance mutual trust and accommodation. We commend the assistance of the UNMIK police to the Kosovo Police that helped in making the visit successful.

Mr. Vassilakis (Greece): I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We also would like to thank his Special Representative and head of UNMIK, Mr. Jessen-Petersen, for his comprehensive briefing on the situation in the region.

I would also like to thank the President of the Coordination Centre of Serbia and Montenegro and of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija, Mr. Nebosja Cović, for his participation in today's meeting.

Greece associates itself fully with the statement that will soon be made by the Ambassador of Luxembourg on behalf of the European Union.

We agree with the analysis of the Secretary-General that, in the aftermath of elections and the creation of a coalition Government in October 2004, the international community is witnessing encouraging signs of commitment by the leadership of the Provisional Institutions to the implementation of the standards. We also share the Secretary-General's overall assessment that, while concrete steps have been taken in some areas, the progress is uneven.

The transition from the elections to the installation of the new coalition Government was held in a smooth and democratic manner that showed increasing maturity on behalf of the Provisional Institutions and the Kosovar political parties. That maturity has, however, to be extended to all parts of Kosovar political life and especially to the implementation of the standards.

The new Government has indeed undertaken serious efforts to accelerate the implementation of the standards, prioritizing those most affecting minority communities. A number of elements from the Standards Implementation Plan are reportedly complete. A number of new mechanisms have been set up and a number of measures taken or are envisaged to be taken.

And yet, we have to note with concern that, as the report recognizes, none of the standards has been fully implemented, while there is a discrepancy between the progress reported in the implementation of the standards and the equally verified widening of the gap in the ethnic divide among the two communities. In the months to come, we should therefore ensure that due attention be paid not only to the observance of the listed actions and recommendations under the standards Plan, but also on how that translates in the reality of the lives of the communities on the ground.

Encouraged though we may be by the early signs of progress, now is the time to focus on the obvious shortcomings. Progress, as amply demonstrated in the report, is for the most part limited to the central power institution structures, with the rest of the system unwilling or unable to follow. The report also rightly points to the fact that the Provisional Institutions have failed to embark on the crucial undertaking of rebuilding the confidence and trust of the minorities. The new notion, set out in the report, of differentiating between the reality and the perception of security for the minorities can be misleading. And in any case winning the battle against perception is sometimes winning half the war.

A serious effort to revitalize the returns process and to improve freedom of movement and the public-

sector employment rates of members of minorities, and, in general, a robust outreach to minorities by the provisional authorities at all governmental levels, would go a long way towards ensuring real and full progress.

As the Secretary-General several times emphasizes in his report, there cannot be full progress in standards implementation without the participation of the Kosovo Serbs and, thus, without a resumption of the dialogue with Belgrade. In that spirit, we welcome the recent letter from Mr. Cović to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General calling for a resumption of the meetings of the working groups on missing persons and energy, and we join the Secretary-General's call to the Kosovo Serbs for engagement in the local reform process.

A key challenge in the whole process remains addressing the problems of the Kosovo economy. Progress in privatization is essential, along with the strengthening of institutional capacity and infrastructure. This is necessary in order to successfully tackle the explosive unemployment plaguing the society, particularly among young people, and potentially undermining efforts for stability and development.

The restoration of all religious sites and property should be a priority for the provisional authorities. Cultural monuments are part both of the history and identity of the communities in Kosovo and of the common heritage of the region. Their preservation is not only a sign of respect, but a duty as well. We are certain that, with the assistance of the international community, the right framework of protection will be formulated and that reconstruction programmes will be promptly implemented.

The road ahead for Kosovo has been clearly defined, within the parameters of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). As we are nearing the time of the comprehensive review, progress has to be taken forward beyond the first encouraging signs and uneven results. A lot is still expected from the provisional authorities, as indeed the people of Kosovo expect a lot from the international community. But the goal of a stable, multi-ethnic, democratic and prosperous Kosovo is a prospect worth all the effort.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry (United Kingdom): Like others, I am grateful to the Secretary-General of his report (S/2005/88), to the Special Representative for his briefing and for the energy with which he is carrying out his tasks in Kosovo and to Mr. Cović for his intervention. The United Kingdom associates itself fully with the European Union's statement to be delivered subsequently by the representative of Luxembourg.

The United Kingdom shares the Secretary-General's assessment that progress in implementing the standards for Kosovo in recent months has been tangible and is encouraging, and the view of the Special Representative that the new Prime Minister and his government have shown impressive commitment and energy in striving to achieve the standards. Focus now must be on continued delivery in the run-up to the comprehensive review later this year. Yet, at the same time, the overall situation in Kosovo is fragile. Hence the need for the United Nations, in cooperation with other appropriate organizations, to manage processes and outcomes so that we are not again overtaken by events.

I would like to make four simple points on what we see as the priorities of Kosovo in the coming months. First, Kosovo cannot take its eye off the paramount task of fulfilling the standards, especially those that relate to Kosovo's minority community. The onus is on the Provisional Institutions, on the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and on all the communities in Kosovo to make sufficient progress on the standards in order for the comprehensive review, which will probably take place this summer, to decide that it is possible to move to the next stage of the process and therefore to start to discuss Kosovo's final status, as is already provided for in resolution 1244 (1999).

That may not be a foregone conclusion, but it is, we believe, achievable if all make the necessary effort and if current trends continue. But standards, particularly those pertaining to the protection of minorities, freedom of movement and the rule of law, are not just a means to starting the status discussion. They are essential to improving the daily lives of all people in Kosovo, and they are also a precondition for European integration. Obviously, any failure to cooperate fully with the International Tribunal in The Hague or any incitement, explicit or implicit, to inter-ethnic violence would be a very serious setback.

Secondly, local government reform is a key to reassuring minorities. The United Kingdom hopes to

see early progress on the five pilot decentralization projects that the new government is now establishing. We hope that these can be launched as soon as possible, and we look forward thereafter to the devolution of further competencies to the municipalities.

Thirdly, Kosovo's struggling economy, with up to 60 per cent unemployment, is obviously a threat to political stability. As regards the European Union and UNMIK's pillar IV, their leadership has an important role in helping the Provisional Institutions to develop an economic development plan and short-term job creation schemes.

Fourthly, Kosovo Serbs remain largely outside Kosovo politics, and we all know the background and the reasons for that. There has been some progress recently with a Kosovo Serb minister in charge of the new Ministry for Returns and Communities, and there has been some Kosovo Serb participation in the decentralization working groups. The prospect of the resumption in March of the direct dialogue working group on the missing, which will take place with Belgrade, is encouraging. But I have to say that, despite the efforts of Mr. Covic, a much more constructive approach is needed from Belgrade. And let me put it to Mr. Covic bluntly, if I may. The only way for Kosovo Serbs to have a say in the future of Kosovo, a future where they can live in peace with their neighbours, is to engage now in the political life of Kosovo. In our view, Belgrade will not be allowed to derail a possible future status process by deliberately obstructing standards implementation.

In conclusion, 2005 will be a key year for Kosovo. The onus lies with the people of Kosovo to make the necessary progress themselves to allow a final status process to start. But the international community, the United Nations, the European Union and NATO must be engaged in ongoing deliberations. The investment being made in Kosovo, if it is to be successful, has to lead to a Kosovo at peace at home and with its neighbours, as Mr. Jessen-Petersen put it in his intervention. But success will also have to recognize that the European destination of Kosovo and its neighbours will be key to insuring that peaceful outcome. But that destination comes with a heavy conditionality.

Mr. Holliday (United States of America): I should like to welcome Special Representative Søren Jessen-Petersen and to thank him for his instructive and thorough briefing. We commend him and his staff for bringing new life to the standards process. The United States appreciates his strong leadership and his hard work in Kosovo. We look forward to continuing to support him and the rest of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) as they work to implement Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

Next month will mark the one-year anniversary of the deplorable violence that erupted in Kosovo. This moment of reflection one year later provides an opportunity for Kosovo's leaders and people to recommit themselves to fulfilling the internationally endorsed standards and to ensuring security and freedom of movement for all its communities.

In that regard, we welcome the energy and determination that the new government of Kosovo's Provisional Institutions has brought to the implementation of the standards for Kosovo. Although some progress has been made, it is important that more be done, particularly in securing the right of refugees and displaced persons to return to their homes, in ensuring security for all communities and in reforming local government. The momentum and the focus that has been applied in recent months must continue, especially at the local level, where progress in some of those areas has thus far been insufficient.

In addition to helping to improve the lives of all residents of Kosovo, sufficient progress on the standards is necessary so that the international community can begin a process to determine Kosovo's future status. We reaffirm that mid-2005 will present itself as the first opportunity for a comprehensive review of Kosovo's progress in implementing the standards, as set out in the Council's presidential statement of 12 December 2003 (S/PRST/2003/26).

We welcome UNMIK's prioritization of the standards as an important step in helping Kosovo to prepare for the mid-2005 review. We also welcome UNMIK's effort to work with the Provisional Institutions to reform local government throughout Kosovo. Decentralization is an area of special importance in implementing the standards and will help make local governments more responsive to the needs of their residents. We welcome recent progress in producing a work plan for the Ministry of Local Government Administration, and we urge the

Provisional Institutions to launch an initial tranche of pilot projects as soon as possible.

The best chance to build a multi-ethnic, democratic Kosovo will come if all of Kosovo's communities participate. We encourage the Kosovo Serbs to rejoin Kosovo's political institutions and working groups, and we urge Belgrade to support that engagement. It is not appropriate to deride the conditions for minorities in Kosovo while refusing to engage in efforts to improve them. In that regard, we welcome the plans to resume the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina on missing persons, and we encourage the resumption of all aspects of the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue.

We also reaffirm the need for all the Governments of the region to cooperate fully with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. That would be not only an important step in moving beyond the legacy of war, but foundational to the establishment of the rule of law.

Mr. De La Sablière (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his briefing, which is a useful supplement to the report of the Secretary-General. I wish to express to him once again France's full support for his activities in Kosovo. His determination, his energy and his leadership qualities have made it possible to maintain a very constructive climate for the international community's efforts in Kosovo. We therefore thank him once again for that. Our thanks go also to General Yves de Kermabon, Commander of KFOR, who in full cooperation with Mr. Jessen-Petersen is leading the stabilizing activities of the international military presence in Kosovo.

The Permanent Representative of Luxembourg will shortly make a statement on behalf of the European Union. I associate myself with that statement, and therefore I shall make only a few comments.

First, I would refer to the Secretary-General's report on standards implementation in Kosovo (S/2005/88), which was issued last week, to note that it welcomes the commitment of Kosovo's provisional authorities to make progress on the eight standards set out by the international community. But, together with the Secretary-General, we also wish to note that progress in many areas remains insufficient and that there is still much to do to ensure the protection of minorities, freedom of movement, the return of displaced persons and refugees, the rule of law and the fight against organized crime.

In particular, we agree with the Secretary-General's emphasis on returns and the rights of Kosovo's communities, and we expect concrete results from the provisional authorities in that area. The responsibility of the majority community is to create a climate in which the members of minority communities, particularly Kosovo Serbs, feel that they can live in Kosovo in normal conditions of safety and dignity.

I would also like to stress that we can move forward towards resolving this matter only if substantial progress is made in those priority areas. That has been the consistent position of the Security Council. The provisional authorities must not only make progress in the areas that concern them, but also permanently sustain the progress made. That is the only way we will be able to decide whether to begin negotiations following the comprehensive review that must be carried out later in the year.

From that perspective — and this is my last point — we appeal to all parties to participate actively and constructively in the processes under way in Kosovo. I would like to stress that my country supports the Secretary-General's appeal to the Kosovo Serbs to become constructively involved in Kosovo's institutions and his appeal to Serbia's authorities to encourage them in that regard. It is only through participation in the institutions and implementation of the standards — not through withdrawal or defiance — that the legitimate interests of the various parties can be taken into account.

Mr. Zhang Yishan (China) (spoke in Chinese): I should like at the outset to thank the Secretary-General for his report and to thank Mr. Jessen-Petersen for his briefing. I should also like to thank Mr. Ović for participating in this meeting and for his statement.

Mr. Jessen-Petersen has done a great deal of active work since he assumed his post last year, and we express our appreciation to him for that. We believe that in his future work he will continue to earnestly carry out the mandate entrusted to him by the Security Council.

This is a crucial period for Kosovo. The current developments in the situation will have an important bearing on its future and on the stability of the entire Balkan region. We have always believed that a sound and comprehensive settlement of the question of Kosovo will require comprehensive implementation of resolution 1244 (1999).

During the most recent period, the situation in Kosovo has remained generally stable. We welcome the active efforts of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government to implement the standards in relevant fields. However, we also note that progress in some key areas remains insufficient, including promoting the return of refugees and ensuring the safety and freedom of movement of minority communities.

We also note that progress has been slow in addressing the issues of employment and economic development and in improving the lives of members of minority groups. We hope that Kosovo's leaders will cooperate actively with UNMIK to undertake further measures in those areas to effectively promote trust and reconciliation among all ethnic communities, thus laying a solid foundation for peaceful coexistence among all of Kosovo's communities. In addition, we hope that the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government and Belgrade will resume direct dialogue as soon as possible. That is essential in order to steer developments in the situation in Kosovo in the right direction.

This year is a crucial one for Kosovo. We believe that during this next stage work should focus on the implementation of the relevant standards in all areas. We hope for a sincere and pragmatic spirit on all sides, which will help promote implementation.

Any acts of violence such as those that occurred last March would have very serious and negative consequences and are therefore unacceptable. We hope that Kosovo can achieve substantive results in the economic and security areas and thereby effectively improve the lives of all the peoples of Kosovo.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Benin.

I should like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for having introduced the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We particularly appreciated the objective technical assessment of the implementation of the standards-before-status policy.

We have gleaned from what we heard that the situation in Kosovo is, on the whole, developing satisfactorily and that significant progress has been made in standards implementation. We particularly welcome the progress made by the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in Kosovo since the October 2004 elections. We welcome the fact that there has been strict compliance with the Constitutional Framework and the rules of the Kosovo Assembly, and we commend the ongoing efforts made by the new Government to ensure respect for the consistent implementation of standards to stabilize the political, economic and security situation in Kosovo, as well as to reinforce the multi-ethnic nature of Kosovo.

We encourage the Government to continue to work towards effective minority integration. We agree with the Secretary-General, who stresses that the Government of Kosovo will be judged on its efforts to build confidence among minorities without losing the confidence of the majority. Therein lie the true challenges that need to be met in order to make Kosovo a multi-ethnic, viable and liveable entity where all communities can be on good terms with each other and work together for a consensus-based management of their daily lives, so that they can design, and have a future together in, a shared society.

We believe that the Government needs to step up its initiatives to overcome the reluctance of the Kosovo Serb community to cooperate with the Provisional Institutions. The Government must promote constructive dialogue with the authorities of Serbia and Montenegro to that end. The Serbian side must be willing to engage in that dialogue.

Belgrade's opposition to the participation by Serbs in the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government has been a real impediment to the implementation and the attainment of the principal goals of the standards-before-status policy. We welcome Belgrade's willingness to resume direct dialogue within the working groups on missing persons and on energy. UNMIK should, for its part, also intensify discussions with the Belgrade authorities, because participation by minorities is the only realistic

option for creating understanding among communities that are bound by a common history and by their commitment to a common land where coexistence is their only choice.

Likewise, it is important for the Kosovo authorities to take a clear stance on inter-community incidents, which continue to taint the atmosphere in the province. However minor they may be, they have a major impact on the subjective considerations which mould people's perceptions about security and give rise to confidence among minority groups.

We encourage all countries in the region to try to find solutions that suit all parties and to restore the inalienable rights of all communities living in Kosovo. For its part, the international community must remain mobilized and speak with one voice to the parties involved in Kosovo to obtain the results we hope to see.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Luxembourg. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Hoscheit (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The acceding countries Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia and Turkey and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this declaration.

Let me begin by thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Mr. Jessen-Petersen, for his briefing and by reiterating the European Union's full support for his work towards implementation of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

It has been nearly a year since the political process was derailed by an outbreak of violence in Kosovo in March 2004 and a few months since the central-level institutions began to function. The European Union shares the Secretary-General's assessment that the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government have shown "some encouraging and tangible progress" in their commitment to the implementation of the standards. The new Government's publicly stated resolve in this regard is duly noted.

The European Union supports UNMIK's prioritization of actions carried out within the framework of those standards that most directly affect minority communities and the goal of a democratic and multi-ethnic Kosovo, especially those concerning the return of refugees and internally displaced persons, the protection of minority communities, freedom of movement and decentralization. In that context, the European Union calls on the Provisional Institutions to make full use of the increased competencies recently transferred to them by UNMIK. It encourages UNMIK to examine the possibility of further such transfers.

Given the important milestones coming up in 2005, we welcome the substantial dialogue between all Kosovo communities, as well as between Belgrade and Pristina. The European Union calls upon all communities to participate actively in the ongoing process leading to the reform of local government and to the establishment of a decentralized and sustainable administration that can guarantee the protection of minority communities and improved living conditions for the population at large.

In that context, the European Union calls particularly on the Kosovo Serb community to engage constructively in the Provisional Institutions at a central level. Kosovo Serbs must recognize that it is in their immediate interest to participate in the ongoing political process; that is the best way for them to promote their legitimate concerns and to have a say in shaping the future of Kosovo.

While the European Union is encouraged by the fact that the authorities in Belgrade have announced their readiness to restart a direct dialogue with Pristina, it regrets that they have not as yet encouraged Kosovo Serb participation in any of the ongoing processes.

While recognizing that progress in the implementation of some of the standards has been made, substantial further progress across all eight standards will be necessary, particularly on the priority actions taken in the framework of those standards. This is especially important given the fact that we are approaching the comprehensive review of overall progress made towards implementation of the standards, to be held in mid-2005. That review will have a major impact on the timing of final-status talks, and it is therefore in the common interest of all

concerned to ensure that real, verifiable progress has been made in the implementation of the standards.

In the long term, and with the European perspective for the Western Balkans in mind, accelerated implementation of standards should not be viewed as a goal in itself nor as a quicker way to a decision on the future status of Kosovo. Through this exercise of implementing the standards, and thereby building a sustainable democratic and multi-ethnic society, the people of Kosovo will move closer to realizing that European perspective.

In that regard, the European Union underlines that full and unrestricted cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia is an international obligation and an essential requirement for further rapprochement with the European Union.

The European Union has been steadfastly at the side of the people of Kosovo throughout the post-conflict period by providing the lion's share of resources — military, financial and human — to repair the damage of war and decades of under-investment. The European Union will continue to help Kosovo to make progress towards sustainable economic development. However, such development is contingent on the creation by UNMIK and the Provisional Institutions, as a matter of priority, of the necessary conditions in the framework of a comprehensive, integrated strategy compatible with the European Union.

I wish to conclude by reiterating that Kosovo will not return to a pre-1999 situation and that the European Union is unwavering in its commitment to helping a democratic and multi-ethnic Kosovo, characterized by the protection it provides to its minority communities, on its way to full integration in Europe, regardless of its future status.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker is the representative of Albania. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Nesho (Albania): Allow me at the outset to express my delegation's appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report on the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) (S/2005/88).

Let me also welcome the presence at this meeting of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Søren Jessen-Petersen, and thank him for his excellent briefing on the situation in Kosovo.

On behalf of my Government, I would like to commend Mr. Jessen-Petersen for his tireless and professional work as head of the Mission, for his effective cooperation with the Kosovo Institutions and with all other stakeholders, and for his active diplomacy in the region. Once again, I would like to assure him of Albania's full support.

We would also like to acknowledge here the important contribution of UNMIK and of the Kosovo Force (KFOR), both of which have definitely played a role in bringing about a much better situation in Kosovo today.

The year 2005 is an important one for Kosovo. In a few months the standards implementation review will take place. Albania shares the Secretary-General's assessment that the recent period, since his last report, has marked significant progress. As the report notes in paragraph 2, "encouraging and tangible progress" has been found in the "commitment of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government to the implementation of the standards. Overall performance has improved", and "work on standards has intensified". Also, as noted in paragraph 4, "the new Government has undertaken serious efforts to accelerate the implementation of the standards". We know that much more remains to be done, but those are tangible accomplishments for UNMIK and the new government headed by Mr. Haradinaj, who, as the report notes in paragraph 2 of annex I, has demonstrated an "outstanding personal commitment to standards, and to accelerating standards delivery".

These accomplishments show movement along the right track, good will and the necessary commitment. They form a solid and optimistic basis for further overall progress on the implementation of the standards during the upcoming months. The implementation of the standards is a complex and long-term process that needs time, capacity and the cooperation of all political factors in Kosovo with the international community. The commitment of all parties and their shouldering of responsibilities in this process will make possible the fulfilment of the required standards.

It is important to highlight that an effective, multi-ethnic, stable and democratic society in Kosovo requires, first of all, adherence to prior commitments and focus on the minority issues, good governance and decentralization.

The issue of minorities, as a basic element of a multi-ethnic society, demands the engagement of governmental institutions at all levels and civil society in Kosovo. We have encouraged the Government of Kosovo to pay closer attention and to work harder in this area; to exert further efforts to revitalize the return process; to expand the inter-community dialogue, and to respect the rights of minorities, including their cultural and religious heritage. We are pleased to note that the Secretary-General states in paragraph 6 his report that "the Government has made the enhancement of minority rights a priority in its programme".

Meeting those objectives not only demands the vision, disposition and commitment of the Kosovo leadership; it also requires the will, engagement and efforts of the Serb community to become part of and a contributor to the new democratic and multi-ethnic society in Kosovo. The non-participation approach, the boycott of the political elections, disengagement in the Assembly and the provisional government, and outside influences in the activities and decision-making of the minority communities not only impede progress in standards implementation but also calls into question the establishment of multi-ethnic institutions and society.

The Serb minority is a part of Kosovo society and, as such, has equal rights and obligations. There is no excuse for a lack of willingness to engage and participate in political life, decision-making and even the process designed to address their special needs. The parallel structures should immediately be dismantled in order not to keep that minority a hostage of the past.

Good governance is a priority objective for the governing institutions of Kosovo. The establishment of the rule of law, an independent judiciary, public administration and respect for private property are indispensable in this respect.

Meeting the standards requires that more competences and responsibilities be transferred to local authorities and that privatization be accelerated. That process would have a positive impact on economic development and on the climate for foreign investment in Kosovo.

Decentralization remains a key process for the establishment of a democratic society in Kosovo. We think that this process should take into account the following three important aspects: respect for the parameters set out in the principles of the Council of Europe on this matter; broad, but gradual, implementation; and the avoidance of cantonization, which would impede the normal functioning of a multi-ethnic society in Kosovo. The Albanian Government holds the view that decentralization should be in parallel with the shaping and strengthening of the central government structures and that the autonomy of local authorities should not avoid or harm the vertical line of power and, what is more, should not encroach upon the territory of Kosovo. We see this as a necessary process that will help the economic, social and cultural development of all communities, strengthen local initiative and bring all the communities closer to the decision-making process.

The standards implementation review requires preparation and commitment by the international community with respect to opening the discussion on the status of Kosovo. As we approach mid-2005, "standards with status" might be the most realistic approach. That would generate a positive impact on the internal developments in Kosovo, as well as on stability, peace and security in the region.

Albania firmly believes that the international community and the Security Council, in cooperation with the Contact Group, the United States of America and the European Union — which have always had a major constructive role in fostering a just and stable balance in the region — need to move forward with the discussion of the status of Kosovo. The solution of the status issue is an indispensable factor for short-term development, as well as for the long-term prospects of Kosovo in the European family.

The Albanian Government thinks that the process of discussion and definition of the status of Kosovo has to take into consideration some basic elements which will undoubtedly produce a long-term solution that would have a positive impact on stability, peace and security in the region. Among them, we would like to mention the following: respect for the democratically expressed free will of the people of Kosovo; guarantees with respect to protection of and respect for minority rights in Kosovo, including guarantees regarding the protection of the legacy of cultural and religious

values, and ruling out the partition of the territory of Kosovo.

Albania remains fully committed to cooperating with the Security Council and the international community in finding just and long-term solutions that will better serve peace and security in the Balkans. As part of the region's trend towards Euro-Atlantic integration, Albania's policy is oriented toward the future, bearing in mind that the past belongs to the past and should not become an obstacle to that future. Certain irreversible realities have to be accepted with courage and realism in any country in the region. Only in that way will we strengthen our cooperation and achieve our common future in the European family.

The President (*spoke in French*): Mr. Nebojsa Ćović, President of the Coordination Centre of Serbia and Montenegro and of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija, has asked for the floor, and I call on him now.

Mr. Ćović (*spoke in Serbian: interpretation provided by the delegation*): I am very grateful for the statements made at this meeting. I have just a few comments to make on what the Council has heard today.

I must make it clear that the Serbs are not victims of misinformation: their sense of insecurity is a consequence of the horrific reality that for nearly six years they have faced in Kosovo and Metohija. Since 2001, I have had the opportunity to observe and participate in the ongoing process. I have attended a number of Security Council meetings on this subject, including meetings that took place before 17 March 2004. At that time, we were full of optimism and we hailed the great achievements that had been made. Then came the events of 17 March. Everyone said that they amounted to a mere incident, but after all that has happened I will leave it to Council members to decide whether that was indeed the case.

We are in an environment that limits our options. Our choices have been reduced to the following. If the status quo remains, there will be violence. If the status quo cannot continue, some Council members have said that Kosovo and Metohija will never come under Belgrade's rule or that the situation will never revert to that of 1999.

Some members have also said that the partition of Kosovo is unacceptable. I appeal to them to take that one step further and say whether or not they would view independence for Kosovo as acceptable. Perhaps we should attempt to have such an exchange of views, because the problem of Kosovo and Metohija has gone beyond the constraints of diplomatic exchanges of views that focus on great achievements, impressions and so forth. For nearly six years, more than 200,000 people have been unable to return to their homes.

Some speakers today, with the best of intentions, spoke of the lack of good will on the part of Kosovo Serbs. What sort of good will must the Serbs demonstrate when their houses are set on fire, when they must go to work in armoured vehicles and when their children need armed escorts to go to school? Does that reflect the multi-ethnic society and the standards we are all fighting for?

I do not think that this is an easy problem. I do not think that Mr. Jessen-Petersen has an easy job. But I appeal to Council members to stop accusing Belgrade of things for which it bears no blame. If the international community is to blame any party for the failure and incompetence of those who should be addressing the Kosovo issue, that party is not Belgrade. Belgrade will accept responsibility, but only where it bears blame.

The Contact Group needs to be able to influence the assessment of standards implementation. Here, let me speak of the standards relating to returns. Assessments of progress cannot be limited to intentions or desires. When we assess progress on returns, we need to know how many people have returned and how many of them have remained in their homes. We know that many will not return, and we do not wish to be biased in that regard. I know that some will respond that numbers are not that important. But they are indeed important. I was encouraged by the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2005/88), because it has begun to make use of figures and percentages: that is the only way that progress can be assessed.

We also heard today that security conditions have improved. How can that be measured? Is it measured by a smaller number of Serbs being killed or injured? It is just that they have learned to keep out of harm's way: that is the reality of Kosovo. Perhaps no one wishes to see that reality, but we must work to improve the situation.

We heard that the situation can be seen to have improved because President Tadic and Prime Minister

Kostunica have visited Metohija. If that is an indication of improved security, then I agree. But this assessment should not be misused with respect to political processes. We have said that Belgrade would not impinge on any such processes; as long as I am in my present position, we will place no obstacles in their way. But we have also promised that we would not accept an arrogant approach on the part of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We can cooperate in the process, but it must be on an equal footing. I request the Council's support in that regard, which would help both us and Mr. Jessen-Petersen.

Encouraging Serbs to participate in the Institutions is no easy matter. I regret that no speaker today mentioned the fact that at one point Serbs did indeed participate in the work of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government. They left, however, because they viewed them as lacking credibility and as being a step towards an independent Kosovo. Such a Kosovo would be without Serbs, but it would not bring peace and stability to the region. We have to be serious politicians and consider matters in the long term.

Let me briefly address the question of power outages. I agree that they constitute a technical problem, and I shall provide members with a transcript of our meeting with the Kosovo Energy Company at Prolom Banja in December 2004. All that was said is true, but it should be added that in the past there were 8,000 Serbs among the company's 15,000 employees; today, there are only 28.

Parallel structures were also mentioned. Such parallel structures provide a livelihood for 35,000 people who live and work in Kosovo.

Let us be open and frank about all the issues. I know that Kosovo and Metohija poses a major twenty-first-century problem, but I am here to work constructively to resolve it.

Lastly, let me refer to the country dialling code, which was also mentioned by the Special Representative. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has said that it would be possible to have both the old country code and the new country code in place, as well as a sub-code that is part of the current country code for Serbia and Montenegro, 381. It would be possible to do that through Monaco, as has been done thus far. We are available for any talks with the Special Representative and UNMIK to come up with an economical solution. But I appeal to all not to misuse the ITU country code issue.

I also ask that the Secretary-General not prejudge the resolution of the issue of Kosovo's final status. Any change in the current "standards before status" policy — such as a change towards "both standards and status" — would basically be a recognition that the international mission in Kosovo had failed.

As far as Belgrade is concerned, we are at the Council's disposal for any kind of constructive cooperation. But we must be very realistic. No politician in Belgrade is ready or willing to participate in the independence of Kosovo.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on Mr. Jessen-Petersen.

Mr. Jessen-Petersen: Let me first thank the members of the Security Council for their many very useful and important observations and statements. It goes without saying that I have listened very carefully. In particular, I would like to thank members of the Council for the many encouraging and supportive words directed at the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and at my colleagues, who, as all the members of the Council are aware, are working in difficult conditions in Kosovo.

I listened with some perplexity, and even real sadness, to the two statements made by Mr. Ćović. I must say that, in listening to Mr. Ćović, I did not quite recognize the situation he described in Kosovo as the one I know after more than six months on the ground. I will not take up the Council's time to go into details about the many things that Mr. Ćović said. I think that the technical assessment and the report of the Secretary-General (S/2005/88) are clear, as Mr. Ćović just recognized. I believe that, as we presented it this time, the technical assessment has the merit of being based on facts, containing many statistics and being based on reality. I am glad that Mr. Ćović recognized that.

As all the members of the Council have stated — and I agree — the report of the Secretary-General is very clear in stating that there has been tangible progress but that there are still many shortcomings and deficiencies. Our focus over the next several months — working with the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government and, I certainly hope, with the minority

communities and the Kosovo Serbs — will be on addressing all the deficiencies and shortcomings, which are mainly linked to improving the conditions of the minorities.

As I said, I cannot go into all the details. I would, however, just like to give the Council a couple of examples of what, I must say, I find totally out of touch with reality on the ground. Mr. Ović spoke about the lack of basic security. We should not get carried away by statistics, but statistics are important. It is a fact — and we have said it many times — that there has not been one single serious ethnically related incident since last June. The perpetrators in that case were arrested immediately and are now before a court. With all due respect to Mr. Ović, that is not because people are simply not moving about. Many Kosovo Serbs are moving about. Many in fact enjoy freedom of movement. However, we must now focus on those who do not enjoy freedom of movement. They exist, and there are far too many of them. I have made it clear that we cannot talk about sufficient progress in terms of implementing standards so long as some minorities are still forced to live behind barbed wire and are unable to move. But the vast majority of Kosovo Serbs are moving about freely. However, as I said, the fact is that there has not been a single serious ethnically related incident since last June.

Let me correct myself. That is not quite true. Unfortunately, two of the Kosovo Serbs who courageously stood in the election were both victims of serious incidents. After the elections, one candidate was attacked in Belgrade and is now seeking refugee status in a European country. Another Kosovo Serb leader was attacked recently in the northern part of Kosovo. That attack was immediately condemned by all political leaders. Again, it is not correct to say that there are incidents and that they are not condemned. If there are no condemnations it is because there have not been any incidents. In the single case where there was an incident — which, regrettably, was against a very important Kosovo Serb leader — there was an immediate condemnation.

Let me give the Council just one more example, and I could give many. As to the lack of access to the media, the easiest thing for me is to quote from a recent report by the independent Temporary Media Commissioner. It is a direct quote; these are not my words: "Minority access to the media compares favourably with the diversity and breadth of access found elsewhere in the Balkans and, indeed, in much of Europe". I could continue, but I would like to point out that it is important that we base our dialogue on honesty and on facts. Then, I think, together we can move forward.

That is also the reason I welcome the readiness recently shown by Belgrade to resume the dialogue. I have been pushing for that ever since my first visit to Belgrade, at the end of August last year, two weeks after I began my mission. I am very pleased that, as a result of my constant pushing on the importance of a dialogue and of Belgrade's being actively involved, we now have an invitation from Belgrade to resume the dialogue. There have been several references to that. I think that is very important, and I welcome it, because it goes without saying — and I have said it so many times — that Belgrade has a key role to play in this process.

I have just two more comments on Mr. Ović's references to telecommunications and to electricity. The reason that UNMIK, acting in full accordance with Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) and based on a statement from the United Nations to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) supporting that request, has pushed for that is that right now, with the telephone lines being under the control of entities other than Kosovo, Kosovo is losing around €50 million in revenue a year. In addition to that, I can talk about telecommunications being, of course, a very important engine of the economy, and, as I have said, we need to get the economy moving.

So, we are not in any way intending to prejudge a final status. That is not our mandate; that is not my responsibility. We have simply asked for that telephone code to be assigned on a temporary basis to the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo in the interests of the clients and the customers throughout Kosovo. It is a technical issue on a temporary, interim basis — nothing else.

As to the electricity issue, I will not devote too many words to it. Far too much has been said about it. Let me just say that this is a problem that, unfortunately, is affecting some 60,000 people right now, of whom 95 to 97 per cent are Kosovo Albanians. It is a result of the legacy of an absolutely dilapidated infrastructure that UNMIK inherited in 1999, and in order to simply have enough revenue for repairs, we have to insist on customers' paying their bills. That is

what we are doing, irrespective of ethnic background. Again, it is a purely technical issue, but we have to generate enough resources to keep the two power plants going.

I do regret that it has affected those people whose power supplies broke down — as a result of deficiencies, not of any policy — and I do regret that, for some people who are not prepared to pay their bills, it is has not been possible to reconnect. I have one single message for those people, including to the very few Kosovo Serbs among them: Pay, and you will have electricity this afternoon.

Let me say that I also welcome recent statements that the Serb Orthodox church now seems ready to re-engage so that we can get on with the urgent work of repairing and restoring the religious monuments. That is a top priority and I am very pleased that, as a result of many initiatives that we have also taken to engage those in the Serb Orthodox church who want to move forward — and there are many, a large majority — and also with the very important help of Belgrade, we have now found a solution, and I believe that we will be able to re-engage and start repairs very soon.

Finally, let me say that I will return to Kosovo determined to continue our close partnership with the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government and to support them in their determinati shortcomings in standards implem that they have a lot of hard work are committed to engaging in tha continue our daily efforts to reac Serbs and to bring them into the p continue the very important dia and with other States in the region

We have a clear agenda ahe clear timetable. We know what Provisional Institutions, as I say, work and a strong commitment t of the priority standards will get determined to succeed. We are d them, and I do look forward Council again three months fro then be able — and I believe I further progress, so that we can region forward towards the no standardization that they need.

The President (*spoke in F*
further speakers on my list. The thus concluded the present stage the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m